

November 30, 2009

TO: Gail Ranahan

FROM: Teresa Parsons, SPHR  
Director's Review Program Supervisor

SUBJECT: Gail Ranahan v. Whatcom Community College (WCC)  
Allocation Review Request ALLO-08-094

On September 23, 2009, I conducted a Director's review telephone conference regarding the allocation of your position. In addition to you, your current supervisor, Business Manager Brian Phelps, and Becky Rawlings, Human Resources Director for WCC, also participated in the conference.

### **Director's Determination**

This position review was based on the work performed for the six-month period prior to September 2, 2008, the date you submitted your request for a position review to WCC's Human Resources Office. However, when considering your role in working with part-time and work-study employees in the Cashier's Office, I also reviewed the spreadsheets of employee hours through September 2008, as provided by Ms. Rawlings. As the Director's designee, I carefully considered all of the documentation in the file, the exhibits presented during the Director's review conference, and the verbal comments provided by both parties. Based on my review and analysis of your assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude your position should be reallocated to the Fiscal Technician Lead classification.

### **Background**

On September 2, 2008, you submitted a Position Review Request (PRR) to WCC's HR Office, requesting that your Fiscal Technician 3 position be reallocated to the Fiscal Technician Supervisor classification. By memorandum dated November 4, 2008, Human Resources Director Becky Rawlings determined your position was properly allocated as a Fiscal Technician 3. Ms. Rawlings concluded that the level of independent work required by your assigned duties best fit the Fiscal Technician 3 classification.

On November 25, 2008, the Department of Personnel received your request for a Director's review of WCC's allocation determination.

The following summarizes your perspective as well as your employer's:

### **Summary of Ms. Ranahan's Perspective**

Ms. Ranahan asserts that at the time relevant to this review she supervised four part-time, hourly employees and one work-study student performing cashiering duties. Ms. Ranahan contends that she interviews applicants for cashiering and makes a recommendation to the Business Manager prior to hiring the cashier positions. Ms. Ranahan states that she trains, assigns, and schedules the work for the cashiers. Ms. Ranahan further indicates that she checks the work of the cashiers for accuracy, notifies the employees of their errors, and makes accounting adjustments as needed. Ms. Ranahan asserts that she acts upon leave requests, gives verbal evaluations, and disciplines employees if necessary, which may include termination. Ms. Ranahan also states that she supervises technical/clerical support staff in both cashiering duties and general office work. Ms. Ranahan points out the definition of supervisor, as stated on the Position Review Request Form, does not state that supervision applies only to classified staff. Ms. Ranahan believes the Fiscal Technician Supervisor classification fits the duties and responsibilities assigned to her position.

### **Summary of WCC's Reasoning**

WCC acknowledges that many of Ms. Ranahan's duties may be compatible with other classifications. However, WCC contends the level of independent work required in addition to the duties assigned to her position fit within the Fiscal Technician 3 classification. WCC recognizes that Ms. Ranahan has a lot of responsibility in the Cashier's Office and that she performs her duties well. However, WCC asserts the level of supervisory responsibilities assigned to Ms. Ranahan's position is not consistent with the definition of supervisor. For example, WCC states that Ms. Ranahan has not been tasked with completing a Performance Development Plan (PDP) for the part-time employees and students working in the Cashier's Office. Similarly, WCC notes that part-time, hourly and work-study employees are not subject to the same corrective action or grievance procedures as classified staff. While WCC agrees Ms. Ranahan interviews employees, makes recommendations for hiring, and assigns, schedules, and instructs employees, WCC contends her duties and responsibilities do not meet the definition of a supervisor. Instead, WCC asserts Ms. Ranahan's position is properly allocated to the Fiscal Technician 3 classification.

### **Rationale for Director's Determination**

The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

A summary of your position's purpose, as described on the Position Review Request (PRR), includes serving as Head Cashier with the responsibility for ensuring the cashier windows are covered to serve students. The PRR also indicates that you "supervise 4 hourly cashiers and 1 work-study" and that you support the college by collecting all monies

coming into the college. In addition, you process tuition and fee refunds and work closely with other departments within the college (Exhibit B-4).

### Duties and Responsibilities

A summary of your specific duties includes:

- Scheduling, training, and supervising part-time hourly and work-study cashiers.
- Serving as Head Cashier for the college, working independently providing customer service to students, faculty, and staff.
- Preparing daily bank deposits.
- Processing and verifying web credit card payments and refunds.
- Independently compiling, reviewing and editing release daily deposit batches.
- Preparing, recording, and balancing disbursed change funds to college staff as needed.
- Verifying tuition refunds, determining whether refund goes to the student or as a credit to their financial aid account.
- Maintaining various CIS tables.
- Assisting with processing financial aid checks.
- Verifying payroll checks for release to staff at the cashier window and for mailing.
- Communicating with college departments concerning changes to tuition and fees.

As part of the decision-making authority assigned to your position, you indicate that you “prioritize and delegate duties for the hourly and work-study cashiers.” You further indicate that cashiers come to you with problems and questions and that you “determine the best course of action to be taken” (Exhibit B-4, page 4). In the Supervisor Review section of the PRR, your supervisor at the time, Business Manager Doug Buck, indicated that he agreed with the information you provided on the PRR and that the information was accurate and complete. Mr. Buck also wrote, in part, the following:

Gail supervises the work-study and hourly cashiers. She interviews, hires, trains, corrects and terminates them if necessary. Gail prioritizes her work schedule as well as prioritizing and scheduling the cashiers and work-study daily work load. Gail makes the monthly calendar for the cashiers to assure the Cashier Window and ABE/ESL registration is appropriately covered. This schedule is very complex . . . Gail also handles any questions and problems the cashiers may have.

During the Director's review conference, you and your current supervisor, Brian Phelps, affirmed that you interview and recommend prospective part-time and work-study employees for the Cashier's Office. You explained that part-time, hourly employees are generally recommended by college staff, faculty or others with a connection to the college. With regard to work-study employees, you indicated that you go through the financial aid office by posting the job on the wall. You described the evaluation process as providing verbal feedback to employees, as well as training employees on processes and procedures and checking their work. You indicated that you may talk with an employee about performance or appropriate attire and that you may give a verbal reprimand, if necessary. You stated that your supervisor may be present when you discuss issues or problems with an employee, if you believe it is necessary for your supervisor to be involved. You also

create the work schedule for all employees to ensure the cashier windows are covered. As a result, employees need to make any request for time off through you, so that you can plan accordingly.

The PDF supports the majority of work described on the PRR. For example, the essential functions reference your duties to "[s]chedule, train, and supervise partime hourly and workstudy cashiers . . ." Though unsigned and undated, you and Ms. Rawlings indicated this was an electronic version of your PDF (Exhibit A-4).

The Department of Personnel (DOP) Glossary of terms for Classification, Compensation, & Management defines **supervisor** as follows:

<http://www.dop.wa.gov/CompClass/CompAndClassServices/Pages/HRProfessionalTools.as>

An employee who is assigned responsibility by management to participate in all of the following functions with respect to their subordinate employees:

- Selecting staff
- Training and development
- Planning and assignment of work
- Evaluating performance
- Resolving grievances
- Taking corrective action

Participation in these functions is not routine and requires the exercise of individual judgment.

While I recognize you perform some of the above functions, the level of evaluation and corrective action assigned to your position is more in line with a lead position. Although an evaluation may be performed in a format that differs from the Performance Development Plan (PDP) process, the evaluation involves a more in-depth assessment than assigning, training, checking the work of employees, and providing verbal feedback.

DOP's glossary of terms defines a **lead** position as "[a]n employee who performs the same or similar duties as other employees in his/her work group and has the designated responsibility to regularly assign, instruct, and check the work of those employees on an ongoing basis." After selecting and training part-time and student employees, you regularly schedule, assign, and instruct the employees on the duties performed in the Cashier's Office. I acknowledge that you maintain a complex work schedule and ensure those employees working in the Cashier's Office understand their duties and responsibilities and provide quality services in handling all monetary transactions occurring at the window and processed through your office. However, the duties and responsibilities assigned to your position best fit the definition of a lead position.

Historically, the former Higher Education Personnel Board (HEPB) relied on three components for determining whether a position tasked with supervising student workers met the same standard as a position supervising classified staff. The three components included the definition of supervisor, the intent of the related class specification, and whether the collective hours of student supervision equated to one FTE. Udovich, Arrington, and Pittman v. The Evergreen State College. HEPB Nos. 3607, 3608, and 3609 (1992). Both the former Personnel Appeals Board (PAB) and the Personnel Resources

Board (PRB) have applied similar criteria when considering supervisory or lead responsibilities.

In a more recent decision, the PRB provided guidance on the definition of supervision. The PRB determined that “[s]upervision of an organization typically includes setting organizational goals, developing plans to meet goals and objectives, developing policies and procedures, preparing budgets, adjusting and authorizing expenditures, controlling the allocation of program resources, and the supervision of staff.” Dawson v. South Puget Sound Community College, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-08-001 (2008).

In Dawson, the Appellant argued that he performed supervisory responsibilities for contract, part-time and work-study staff. However, the PRB determined his position provided “on-the-job work instruction” but did not “perform training and development at a level expected of a supervisor.” While the PRB concluded Appellant had oversight of the daily work, provided feedback, and responded to service complaints related to the service provided, he did not conduct formal performance evaluations or adjust formal grievances. As a result, the PRB determined Appellant’s position was properly allocated to a lead classification.

The PRB has also addressed the one FTE standard applied by previous Boards. The PRB agreed “there must be a threshold which can be objectively applied to each set of duties and responsibilities when determining the appropriateness of allocation to a lead or supervisory class.” The PRB further concurred “the established threshold of 1.0 FTE should continue to be used as the basis for determining the appropriateness of allocation to a lead or supervisory class.” Tacoma Community College v. Edward Harmon, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-08-012 (2008), citing Halcomb v. Shoreline Community College, Higher Education Personnel Board (HEPB) Case No. 3453 (1992); Baker v. University of Washington Health Services, Personnel Appeals Board (PAB), Case No. 3821-A3 (1994); and Washington State University v. Marc Anderson, PAB Case No. ALLO-04-005 (2004).

You lead part-time, hourly and work-study employees whose combined hours totaled 1728.75 for the period of March – August 2008. The total number of full-time hours available to work during this period (minus holidays) was 1024. This is consistent with Ms. Rawlings’ calculation showing 128 days available for full-time work (Exhibit C-4). Based on the calculations, you have met the threshold for leading part-time and work-study employees whose combined hours total at least one FTE.

### Class Specifications

When comparing the assignment of work and level of responsibility to the available class specifications, the class series concept (if one exists) followed by definition and distinguishing characteristics are primary considerations. While *examples of typical work* identified in a class specification *do not form the basis for an allocation*, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification.

The **Fiscal Technician Class Series Concepts** states, in part:

Positions perform ongoing, routine and repetitive fiscal tasks in a manual or automated system. Duties can be assigned in Accounts Receivables, Accounts

Payable, Purchasing, Payroll, Grants and Contracts, Student Aid, Fixed Assets, Revenue, or General Accounting.

Positions prepare, review, verify, and process fiscal, accounting, budget, book or record keeping documents. Performs computing, calculating financial, statistical and numerical data to maintain accounting, budgeting, purchasing, payroll records and reports. Records details of fiscal or business transactions in an increasing automated fiscal computer enhanced environment.

Your position fits within the class series concept for Fiscal Technician positions.

The definition for a **Fiscal Technician 3** indicates positions “[p]rovide fiscal support using independent judgment in the interpretation and application of a variety of rules and procedures in specialized fiscal functions, such as internal control, revolving fund maintenance control, and providing resource data for reports. The distinguishing characteristics indicate that positions “[p]erform detailed fiscal work where independent judgment is exercised to make fiscal determinations and to solve problems that arise within work assignments.”

While you do provide fiscal support and use independent judgment while performing your duties in the Cashier's Office, the Fiscal Technician 3 classification does not encompass your lead responsibilities.

The **Fiscal Technician Supervisor** definition indicates that positions “[s]upervise technical/clerical support staff in assigned fiscal activities including planning, coordinating and determining of methods and procedures to be utilized in the maintenance of controls, records and reports.” The distinguishing characteristics of the supervisory class include the following:

With delegated authority, interview and recommend selection of applicants, conduct training, assign and schedule work, act upon leave requests, conduct annual performance evaluations and recommend disciplinary action. Supervise technical/clerical support staff in accounting, budgeting, cashiering, payroll, and purchasing.

As I previously indicated, some of your responsibilities fall within the Fiscal Technician Supervisor classification because your supervisor has indicated that you interview and recommend applications, train employees, and assign and schedule work. However, when comparing the level of supervisory responsibility assigned to your position, it does not encompass the full scope of responsibility with regard to performance evaluations or disciplinary actions. I recognize there is an element of evaluation involved in the feedback you provide. I also recognize that you may verbally reprimand a part-time or work-study employee or recommend termination when the employee is not performing as expected. However, based on the guidance of prior Board decisions, as well as the definition of supervisor described in DOP's glossary of terms, your duties more closely align with those of a lead position.

The **Fiscal Technician Lead** definition reads as follows:

This is the senior, specialist, or leadworker level of the series. Positions often perform complex technical fiscal duties in a wide variety of settings. Interpret and apply fiscal regulations and procedures. Ensure procedural fiscal compliance, accuracy, and deadlines are met. Establish and maintain comprehensive fiscal, book, or record keeping systems, analyzing and maintaining fiscal accounts or records. Positions at this level often support other diverse units in the organization. Positions may also specialize in one fiscal area such as overseeing the total payroll function. Other positions may be designated to function as the leadworker over other positions performing fiscal support related activities.

Your primary responsibilities include serving as the Head Cashier leading other positions in performing the fiscal support activities needed to ensure the Cash Office runs smoothly and that students, faculty, and staff are served with the various transactions that occur in the Cash Office on a daily basis.

It is clear by your supervisor's comments that your work is greatly valued. A position's allocation does not diminish the quality of work performed and is not a reflection of performance. Rather, an allocation is based on the majority of work assigned to a position. Based on the level, scope and diversity of the overall duties and responsibilities assigned to your position, the Fiscal Technician Lead classification is the best fit.

### **Appeal Rights**

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to . . . the Washington personnel resources board . . . . Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The mailing address for the Personnel Resources Board (PRB) is P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911. The PRB Office is located at 600 South Franklin, Olympia, Washington. The main telephone number is (360) 664-0388, and the fax number is (360) 753-0139.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

c: Becky Rawlings, WCC  
Lisa Skriletz, DOP

Enclosure: List of Exhibits

**Gail Ranahan v. Whatcom Community College (WCC)**

**ALLO-08-094**

List of Exhibits

- A. Gail Ranahan's Request for Director's Review Form November 25, 2008 with attached WCC Allocation determination letter dated November 4, 2008
  - 1. Summary of Ms. Ranahan's reasons for allocation as a supervisor
  - 2. Class Specification for Fiscal Technician 3
  - 3. Class Specification for Fiscal Technician Supervisor
  - 4. Position Description Form no date or signature
- B. WCC Exhibits January 23, 2009
  - 1. Request for Directors review form (same as exhibit A above)
  - 2. WCC allocation determination letter dated November 4, 2008
  - 3. Reclassification Analysis (WCC's method)
  - 4. Position Review Request Form August 2008
  - 5. September 2008 time sheet
  - 6. Class Specification Fiscal Technician Supervisor with WCC notations
  - 7. Class Specification Fiscal Technician Lead with WCC notations
  - 8. Class Specification Fiscal Technician 3 with WCC notations
  - 9. Position Description Form not signed or dated / Organizational Chart
  - 10. May 14, 2009 email from Becky Rawlings with WCC Nonpermanent Employment Agreement and Authorizations attached
- C. Email correspondence as follow up after Director's Review Conference
  - 1. September 25, 2009 email from Becky Rawlings with attached hours of part-time/student hours (Not considered because these documents were replaced with Exhibit C-4 below).
  - 2. September 25, 2009 email comments on above exhibit.
  - 3. September 30, 2009 email from Brian Phelps clarifying the work hours.
  - 4. October 13, 2009 email from Becky Rawlings with **revised** attachment of hours of part-time/student hours.